

The MCA Advisory

The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

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Kolbe's Sale of Ford Library II June 11th
ANS Convention July 27th-31st

From the Editor

The call for short articles on “My Favorite Medal” was well answered, as you will see below. As hoped, the medals cited in these articles are an eclectic bunch, helping to diversify our subject matter as was the intent.

We were delighted to hear from Dave Bowers. Dave has agreed to do an article on Franklin Peale, certainly one of the more controversial figures in U.S. Numismatics. We were equally delighted to hear from Khalil Gibron. Khalil is one of our most erudite members, who will give the rest of us a Ph.D. in Medals if we can coax him to become a regular contributor.

Don Scarinci begins a ten part series with a piece on the storage of medals. As a non-profit organization, we cannot traffic in supplies but, if some enterprising member wanted to sell boxes, tissue, brushes, solvents, etc. we would carry his/her advertisements at no charge. A quality source of supplies would be a boon to our members.

My Favorite Medal

(by Bill Murray)

The Spanish American War only lasted from April to August in 1898. Several military medals were issued for the event. The West Indies Naval Campaign Medal was authorized by the Act of 3 March 1901 for distribution to officers and men of the Navy and Marine Corps for military service of unusual merit. It is generally called the “Sampson Medal” for Admiral William Sampson, Commander in Chief of U.S.

Naval operations in the West Indies during the war.

The obverse presents a bust of Admiral Sampson, with his name to the left and “Commander in Chief” to the right. The reverse, designed by George T. Morgan depicts three men involved in naval combat aboard ship, left to right, a sailor, a naval officer and a marine. Below, in two lines, is the engagement for which this medal was awarded, “Santiago de Cuba/July 3.” The medal suspends from a pin back bar on which the name of the ship involved appears, in this case, the battleship U.S.S. Indiana. The ribbon presents a field of red bisected by a blue stripe. The blue represents the Navy and the red the Marine Corps.

Edge lettering at the bottom of the medal reads, “Thomas H. Murray O. SEA.” This Ordinary seaman was my father.



My Favorite Medal

(by Scott Miller)

Having just read Steve Pellegrini's suggestion that we each write a brief article on a favorite medal, my first

reaction was to think how it would be possible to decide. While not in the same league as trying to decide on a favorite child, I thought I did not have a single medal that shone far above the rest. Clearly, I was not thinking, and this after several cups of coffee. My wife put things into perspective when she said, "That's easy, ask the wife". She suggested it was the marriage medal given to us by Paul Bosco as a wedding present. She's probably right, but I picked another.

In 2000 and 2001 I had the honor to serve as president of the New York Numismatic Club. Founded in December 1908 as a social organization, the Club is in robust health, continuing its tradition of monthly meetings characterized by a fine dinner, pleasant conversation and an illustrated talk on a numismatic subject.

During the more than 95 years since its inception, a number of prominent numismatists have served as Club president. Among those who have led the Club were F.C.C. Boyd, Dr. Daniel Valentine, J. Sanford Saltus, Howland Wood, and Edward T. Newell. It has been a tradition to strike a 38mm medal upon the end of each president's term, with the outgoing officer's portrait on the obverse and the Club seal on the reverse. And so it was in December 2001 that I joined the Pantheon of Past



Presidents of the New York Numismatic Club and found myself the subject of a medal, the latest in an illustrious line.

The obverse of the medal is the work of sculptor Eugene Daub, a winner of the J. Sanford Saltus medal for Signal Achievement in the Art of the Medal who also designed two medals for the American Numismatic Society. The reverse was designed by sculptor and former Club president Jonathan Swanson. The portrait itself is a work of art; I only wish I looked that well.

My Favorite Medal

(by Lev Tsitrin)

One of the least attractive reverses in George Hill's *Corpus* of the medals of the Italian Renaissance is that of Sperandio's medal of Fra Cesario Contughi, a servite of Ferrara. What renders it unattractive is not so much its poor artistic quality – Sperandio's reverses are seldom of the first class--as the subject matter. It shows a seated monk contemplating a skull, and the motto "inspice mortale genus mors omnia delte" (which the on-line Latin-English dictionary seems to render as "consider, o mortal race, that death brings an end to everything") only adds to the feeling of gloom. Looking at the picture of the medal in Hill (fig. 1), one wonders whether the Frate derived much hope from his faith. One even wonders whether he realized that there was life before death, leaving alone the question of whether there is life after it.

The only reason I focused on this thoroughly unpleasant piece, is that I recently got a medal (fig. 2), stylistically of the period covered in Hill's *Corpus* but

which I was unable to locate in any of his indexes. It appears, however, to relate to the medal of the despairing Brother Contughi in more respects than one. It depicts another monk of the Servite order, by the name of Fel[ipe?] Pelagatti, who must have been Contughi's identical twin. The medallist apparently did not bother to model the portrait from life, but just impressed the obverse of the Contughi medal into the mold to get the portrait. Yet Pelagatti must have been a person of an altogether more cheerful temper: his reverse, while also playing on the theme of death, displays the exact opposite of the moribund mindset of his colleague. It shows a lively resurrection scene, with a Botticellesque angel sounding a trumpet, and an equally graceful figure emerged from the grave to welcome the regained life. The motto – "meam extrahe sortem" (which appears to mean "in the end, deliver me") shows an outlook that negates the effect of death, rather than submits to it while yet alive.

The medal is hardly an original cast; the reverse, modeled in an ambitiously low relief, is (not too subtly) reinforced by burin and there is some burin work on the obverse, reinforcing a few letters. The piece is unsigned, thought an idiosyncrasy of using triangular stops at the base of the line to separate words may point to the identity of the artist. I did not find another medal in Hill with a similar style of inscription.



All in all, this chance purchase highlighted for me the fun of medal collecting – apart from giving plenty of purely aesthetic pleasure, it makes one learn and think – and, as in this case, even contemplate such grave matters as the brevity of life – and the transience of death.

My Favorite Medal

(by Theodore O. McMann)

In 1776 after America declared Independence from England, Benjamin Franklin was sent to France as the country's first Ambassador to enlist the aid of France in providing arms, munitions and such other military assistance as King Louis XVI was willing to make available.

America received only covert help until the defeat of Burgoyne at Saratoga

in 1777 convinced the French that the British could be beaten. France provided money and, up until 1781, relatively ineffective military assistance. However, at the battle of Yorktown, the French navy and its land forces were crucial to the victory.

Franklin, ever the Francophile, felt that the contribution of France had not been sufficiently recognized in the medals previously voted by Congress. Therefore, he used his own money to create the *Libertas Americana*, thought by many to be one of the most beautiful medals ever made. The obverse pictures Liberty with a Phrygian cap, the symbol of a free citizen; the reverse depicts France in the guise of Minerva protecting America in the form of an infant Hercules against the British lion.

Franklin ordered two medals in gold, 47 in silver and 200 in bronze [Theodore can't locate his source for these figures; can any of our readers confirm them? —ed.] The gold specimens were given to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The silvers were presented to heads of state and other important dignitaries. The bronze medals were distributed to Franklin's friends, to institutions such as the Library Company of Philadelphia and to leaders of Congress.

Specimens of the *Libertas Americana*, whether in silver or bronze, are avidly sought today. I own an example in each metal and the pair are indeed my favorite medals.

My Favorite Electro

(John W. Adams)

Antoine Vechte (1800-1868) is a French artist best known for his bas-reliefs and repousse work. Most of his pieces are non-numismatic but he did execute two large medallions. One depicts the Virgin Mary on the occasion of the Proclamation of the Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX. The other is an award medal for the National Art Competition open to art schools in the United Kingdom. The former medallion is 6.2 inches in diameter and the latter 5.6 inches, making them too large for conventional striking. Thus, all examples of both are electrotypes.

Inspired by Lev Tsitrin's article on electrotypes, I acquired an example of the Competition medallion, awarded to Fanny Francis in 1864. It is a simply superb piece of work, featuring an intricate border within which are eight nude figures in various classical poses in repoussé. At the very center of all these nudes is the crowned head of the prudish Queen Victoria in high relief, an irony that may or may not have been intended. Between the extensive hand work and the elaborate design, this medal is a show unto itself.

Franklin Peale Document Explained

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(by D. Wayne Johnson)

Our esteemed editor, John Adams, reported in the last *MCA Advisory* on the Franklin Peale documents he found at the Midatlantic Archives, which house early U.S. Mint records. He revealed the detailed cost of the Polk Indian Peace Medal submitted to the War

Department, which was charged with their creation. The date was November 2, 1841. This was in due time after the Mint's acquisition of their Contamin die-engraving pantograph (ordered from France in 1836 after Peale's trip to European mints to learn of their minting technology). We can assume for the intervening years Peale was learning how to use it (he also imported a coining press which he took apart and reassembled).

Each line in this chart reveals the technology of the period:

One large size model in wax \$60.

This was the payment to the sculptor for a bas-relief portrait of President James K. Polk, by John Gadsby Chapman (1808-1889), an early American painter, wood engraver, etcher, author and illustrator in addition to being a sculptor. Chapman prepared the portrait in wax, it was a positive wax model he submitted to Peale.

Moulding in iron \$20.

Peale made a cast iron pattern from Chapman's wax model (or he could have had a foundry do this). This was easy to do by existing foundry techniques. It was not "lost-wax" because it did not require a core. A casting of a bas-relief was as simple as coating the surface of the positive wax portrait with a release agent (such as talcum powder) and packing wet sand around it (or the use of a ceramic investment) to form the mold. This later would serve as the mold for the careful pouring the molten iron into the relief form.. This would make a negative relief portrait in hard-metal cast iron.

Retouching hub and die \$125.

At this point the negative cast iron pattern could be placed on the Contamin die-engraving pantograph. It would cut into diestock to make a negative "device punch" for one of the three size dies. This would be sunk by hubbing into another diestock which had been softened (by annealing, heating and slow cooling). A switch of polarity occurs here; the Contamin does not change polarity – you get a negative die from a negative pattern. Casting and hubbing changes polarity – you get a negative from a positive or a positive from a negative – You get a die from a hub.

This *device punch* of the portrait only would be sunk into another diestock by hubbing and was unique to the size of one of the dies. Hubbing was as old as diesinking itself, the ancients knew how to make an impression in metal from another relief in metal; they knew how to harden and soften iron (remember the Iron Age dates from 1000 BC). At the U.S. Mint hubbing was accomplished on their strongest screw press.

Once that was completed, the remainder of the obverse on that diestock would be added, the circular rim cut in (to be raised on the struck piece). This could be accomplished on a metal lathe. Then the date below and the lettering in the legend around the perimeter of the rim would be added. It would be punched in by hand with individual letter punches. After inspection and perhaps a test splasher for further proof the die was complete and all elements accurate, this die would be hardened (by tempering, heating and very quick cooling). Iron has the property of

hardening and softening at the will of the diesinker but he must have knowledge of heat-treating.

The same process would be repeated for each of the other two Polk Indian Peace Medal dies with a different size device punch made from the one and only cast iron pattern. The Contamin was ideal for the Indian Peace Medals because of this ease of replicating dies in three different sizes of the exact same design. Indian Peace Medals of this period were required in three sizes for the importance of the Indian recipients (The higher Indian chiefs would get the larger variety, of course).

Peale used the term "retouching" and this is appropriate at every step in this new process. At each stage the work would be examined for any imperfections, both under magnifying glass and by striking and examining lead splasers. These would be corrected by hand using engraving tools and chasing tools.

Casting imperfections, for example, such as trapped air would cause voids; these would be chased, to smooth out the surface. These air pockets tend to locate next to relief. If such a void was left in the mold it would result in a "boss," a raised lump, in the cast piece. This would be chased away, removing the excess metal by burin or chisel.

Imperfections from the Contamin machine might be circular troughs in the die as the stylus played across the surface of the pattern. Such circular lines would be removed with an emery polishing. (Later diecutting improved, if

these circular lines appeared it was sloppy work of the operator. They could be eliminated by making several passes and using finer tracing points and finer cutting points for subsequent passes.)

So Peale's retouching must have been extensive. Particularly using the new equipment and the new technique. This is the removal of "bugs" any new technology inevitably displayed. The high cost here, \$125, suggests that copious retouching was done.

Die forging and turning \$25.

This amount was for the purchase of "diestock" – specially prepared iron to be made into dies. These were cut on the Contamin with the design of the president from the pattern containing the president's image.

See the adjacent article in regard to the meaning of "die forging." The turning is straight forward placing the die containing the image on a lathe and trimmed it to fit the press.

Contingencies \$20.

Unknown today, but this could have included almost anything.

Editor Adams was indeed correct in the meaning of "2nd and 3rd" as the cost of preparing the other two dies for the three-sizes of Polk Indian Peace Medals. Once the pattern existed in hard metal any number of sizes could be created. In modern times this is evident, say, in the ANA Convention Badge Medals. One pattern is prepared, standard size 1 1/2-inch die for the large size and 3/4-inch die size for the "Ladies Badge" both come from that one pattern.

This is true also for miniature military decorations, which are half the diameter of standard size medals.

I am trying to think of some other recent examples where more than two sizes were made from the same pattern. The Hudson-Fulton Medal of 1909 was issued in several sizes; this was struck by Whitehead & Hoag who should have made all size dies from the same pattern, but I cannot say this for certain.

Meaning Of 'Die Forging' Revealed.

FOR all my research in mint technology the concept of "*die forging*" was unknown to me until I got knee deep in the archives of the Scovill Manufacturing Company. This "forging" is not counterfeiting but was a preparation, a pre-treatment, of metal before it was made into dies. It was the preparation of a blank die, ready to be engraved, either by hand or by machine. If you are thinking "forging" as analogous to what a blacksmith does, you are not that far from the truth.

Today we take for granted the many forms and tempers of steel. You can buy exactly what you want. There are steel plants which make specialized steel in many varieties. In the early 19th century, however, this was not the case. You had to work with iron because steel making was still being developed in this country.

At the U.S. Mint immediately after it was founded in 1792, their greatest difficulty was keeping dies in production (in addition to a continuing supply of metal blanks). Dies would easily break. To give them a longer life

they need to be tempered, hardened, and this was done by *heat treating*. Henry Voigt, somewhat of a mechanical jack-of-all trades, spent considerable time experimenting in ways to extend die life at the Mint. His experiments with iron forging and hardening the iron, gave some success to his activities as Chief Coiner.

In England, Matthew Boulton solved this problem easily: he purchased hardened tool steel from his friend, Benjamin Huntsman, who had invented a method of making crucible steel (1756). Huntsman's firm supplied specialized tool steel for over 200 years (until 1950). Americans purchased steel from Huntsman, but apparently needed such quantity that they tried to supply their own.

For Scovill Manufacturing Company, Waterbury Connecticut, the problem existed from their beginning in 1804. They required hundreds of dies for their button manufacture. In the Scovill records I saw names of suppliers of dies that I first thought had been engraved outside their plant and furnished to them for striking. This was not the case. Further study revealed that was iron intended to become dies. They were *heat treated*, heated and tempered, hammered and hardened. It required a specialized knowledge of heat treating, iron metallurgy and blacksmithing.

This diestock was layered--forged layers repeatedly folded over and over on top of each other to improve internal temper. This was a technology similar to sword making for increasing the temper or hardness of swords.

Scovill required dies in such quantity they obtained metal from several *die forgers*. Soon they realized they could not trace who had supplied the better diestock, so they asked the die forgers to sign their diestock. They did this on the side of the dies. Some Scovill dies that I viewed 150 years later still had these initials or signatures on the sides of the dies.

The firm of G. Grayson of Providence, Rhode Island, supplied the greatest quantity of forged die blanks to Scovill. Grayson punched their three-line logotype on the side of the die. Another signature I observed was OJB, from O.J. Brown, but I was unable to learn of his location. In all, there was a vibrant metal industry in the Connecticut Valley to support die forgers located perhaps from Boston to New Haven.

Without further discovery in U.S. Mint archives, we do not know where the Mint obtained their dieforged diestock.

Medal Storage Systems

(by Donald Scarinci)

Perhaps the two most important things that generate and maintain collector interest in an area are the availability of reference materials and the availability of storage systems. After all, it was those old Wayte Raymond holders that caused the boom in collecting by date. In the last decade, the creation of C-4 and the proliferation of reference material about colonial coins have made that numismatic area mainstream again.

Medal collecting is a very broad area. Medals can be collected in so many different ways--by country, by artist, by theme, by style, by period, by mint, etc. Unlike coins, medals come in a much wider range of sizes and shapes. Also unlike coins, very few medals sell for more than \$100. Even fewer sell for more than \$1,000. So there isn't as much profit in medals as there is in coins. Hence, there are not many auction catalogs available, not many books published and no storage systems whatsoever.

The problem of availability of reference materials will be a subject for next month. In this column, I will focus on storage systems.

One of the very first problems that I encountered as a medal collector was how to store them. Coins and medals have historically been stored in mahogany cabinets. There are some excellent cabinetmakers that can build to order and there is an array of plastic trays that are quite suitable for storing medals. Larger contemporary art medals fit nicely into map cabinets and, other than their size; these cabinets are a practical and attractive way to store a collection.

The more a collection grows, the more complicated the storage problem becomes. Coming from the coin tradition, I looked for sulfur free cotton lined paper holders or PVC free safe flips. Dealers often use the 3 ¼ X 3 ¼ flip with PVC for ease of handling. However 3 ¼ X 3 ¼ is often too small to store medals with high relief and

impossible to store medals larger than 76mm.

As to the PVC, every coin collector knows that PVC is detrimental for coins. Medals are more tolerant because their surfaces are protected at manufacture, but PVC still causes damage in the long term. In the short term, many medals end up with a greasy slime that detracts from their appearance.

There is only one manufacturer who makes flips larger than 2 ¼ X 2 ¼ without PVC and it is the same manufacturer who makes 4 X 4 flips. However, while the 4 X 4 flip can fit most medals, it offers little protection against rubbing due to medals being stored surface to surface in boxes.

That being said, the 4 X 4 PVC free flip is the most efficient way to store medals that is currently available. I use airtight Rubbermaid containers to store the flips and I throw in some silica gel and some Intercept Shield lining for added protection in the long term. Both are easily available from Amos Press. The containers do get heavy, but at least they can fit in safe deposit boxes or metal shelves.

If the medal comes with an original box, it is important to save the box and to catalog the fact that it exists and its location. With a 4X4 flip, there is space to keep a card with information about the medal. I keep all of my original boxes in separate containers and store them safely at home. They would be of no interest to any thief, so it is not necessary to use space in a safe deposit box to store original boxes.

Medal collectors need a standardized and accepted method of safe storage. Toward this end, the Medal Collectors of America should begin to explore storage systems. We should begin to exchange thoughts on this subject in the monthly Advisory.

I have been in touch with the distributors of Intercept Shield who make the storage system for slabbed coins. The slab is placed in a box lined with intercept shield and these boxes are then placed in standard size boxes that are also lined with intercept shield for added protection. It is a very manageable storage system.

One idea is to make Intercept Shield lined 4 X 4 boxes or expandable 4 X 4 envelopes that can be written on and inserted into a larger Intercept Shield lined box. Sulfur free cotton liners, like the smaller ones that are customarily used to hold large cents and colonial coins can be manufactured separately. The medal could be inserted into the cotton liner to keep it from moving or rubbing and the cotton liner could be inserted in the 4x4 container. The 4x4 containers could then be stored in boxes. This method is a larger version of the most accepted way to store coppers, except that we would be using modern intercept shield technology for added protection.

It would be interesting and helpful to exchange information about medal storage and get some feedback on the Intercept Shield system that I propose. If enough people are interested, perhaps we could design a prototype in time for

the MCA meeting at the ANA convention in San Francisco.

[John Ford folds two pieces of tarnish-proof tissue around the medal and then inserts it into a paper envelope. The latter permits the owner to catalog a plethora of information while doubling the protection. —ed.]

Gems from the U.S. Mints Annual Report for 1855

(by Q. David Bowers)

The following gems, taken from the U.S. Mint's Annual Report for 1855, were submitted by Q. David Bowers.

Gem #1 – A letter to the mint from a prominent Philadelphia institution advocating a Federal subsidy for historical medals:

Philadelphia, February 27, 1854.
The matter of a communication addressed by the secretaries and librarian to Hon. J. Ross Snowden, Director of the United States Mint, containing inquiries and a request concerning the national medals, coming up for discussion.

Mr. Snowden said, it gave him much pleasure that this subject had been brought to the attention of the Society. National and public medals are important monuments of history, and their preservation is well worthy the attention of this Society, and others of similar character in the United States. Most of the gold and silver medals, either from reverse of fortune or from some other cause, find their way to the melting-pot. It would be a higher compliment to the recipients of the honorable distinction in question, if

Congress should authorize copies in bronze to be struck and presented to each historical society in the United States. Heretofore no legal provision has been made for the preservation of such copies, or the taking care of the dies from which the medals were struck. Fortunately, however, most of the dies heretofore made have been procured and preserved at the Mint of the United States. Some of them were procured with much difficulty.

Mr. Snowden's belief was, that nearly sixty medals of a national and public character have been made, of which the dies of all but five or six are at the Mint in this city. A full set of copies in bronze would cost about one hundred and forty dollars. A small appropriation by Congress would supply each State in the Union with a set; and hereafter when medals are voted, provision could be made for supplying copies, to be distributed in the manner proposed.

On motion, it was Resolved, that Hon. J. Ross Snowden be requested to correspond with the Secretary of the Treasury, or take such other measures as may seem to him advisable, to effect the objects developed in his remarks on the distribution of the national medals.

Extracted from the minutes.

Thomas Biddle, Jr.

Recording Secretary

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Gem # 2 – A list of dies on hand at the U.S. Mint. Note #70, the obverse die (and only the obverse die) for Henry Lee.

1. Horatio Gates. —Obverse and Reverse.
2. Daniel Morgan. —Obverse and Reverse. [These were not the original dies but, rather, a second set of dies

made up in 1839 in order to re-strike the Morgan family's lost gold medal—ed.]

3. Isaac Hull. —Obverse and Reverse.
4. Jacob Jones. —Obverse and Reverse.
5. Stephen Decatur. —Obverse and Reverse.
6. William Bainbridge. —Obverse and Reverse.
7. Oliver H. Perry. —Obverse and Reverse.
8. Oliver Hazard Perry. —Obverse and 2 reverses
9. Jesse D. Elliott. —Obverse and Reverse.
10. W. Burrows. —Obverse and Reverse.
11. Edward R. McCall. —Obverse and Reverse.
12. James Lawrence—Obverse and Reverse..
13. Thomas Macdonough. —Obverse and Reverse.
14. Stephen Cassin. —Obverse and Reverse.
15. L. Warrington. —Obverse and Reverse..
16. Johnson Blakeley. —Obverse and Reverse.
17. Charles Stewart. —Obverse and Reverse..
18. Winfield Scott. —Obverse and Reverse..
19. James Miller. —Obverse and Reverse.
20. Edmund P. Gaines—Obverse and Reverse..
21. Peter B. Porter. —Obverse and Reverse..
22. Jacob Brown. —Obverse and Reverse..
23. Eleazer W. Ripley. —Obverse and Reverse.
24. Alexander Macomb. —Obverse and Reverse.
25. James Biddle. —Obverse and Reverse.
26. Andrew Jackson. —Obverse and: Reverse.
27. Isaac Shelby. —Obverse and Reverse.
28. William H. Harrison. —Obverse and Reverse.

29. George Croghan. —Obverse and Reverse.
62. Zachary Taylor. —Obverse and Reverse.
63. Zachary Taylor. —Obverse and Reverse.
64. Zachary Taylor. —Obverse and Reverse.
65. Winfield Sctt. —Obverse and Reverse.
66. Winfield Scott. —Obverse and Reverse.
67. "Bache Medal."—Obverse and Reverse.
68. "Somers Medal."—Obverse and Reverse.
69. G. Washington. -- Obverse and Reverse.
70. Henry Lee. —Obverse only:
58. Thomas Truxton. —Obverse and Reverse.

Indian Peace Medal Dies

Obverse: Containing name and date of inauguration of the President.
Reverse: The inscription, "Friendship and Peace," over joined hands, or tomahawk and pipe.

- 31, 32, 33. Thomas Jefferson. —Three sizes.
- 34, 35, 36. James Madison. —Three sizes
- 37, 38, 39. James Monroe. —Three sizes
- 40, 41, 42. John Quincy Adams. —Three sizes
- 3, 44, 45. Andrew Jackson. —Three sizes.
- 46, 47, 48. Martin Van Buren. —Three sizes.
- 49, 50, 51. John Tyler. —Three sizes.
- 52, 53, 54. James K. Polk. —Three sizes.
- 55, 56, 57. New Reverses. —Three sizes.
- 59, 60, 61. Zachary Taylor. —Three sizes.

Gem #3

A proposal to start a medal department or, more properly, a legitimate medal department. Prior to his out-placement in 1854, Franklin Peale had operated on a more "informal" basis.

§1. Be it enacted, etc., That there shall be established at the Mint of the United States a Medal Department, to be under the direction and control of the Director of the Mint; but the Director may designate such officer or person as he may deem proper to have the immediate charge of the same,

under his direction, and he may employ such workmen as he may deem necessary.

§2. Medals of gold, silver, and bronze may be struck for any department of the government, for any State or society, or person or persons, under such general regulations as the Director of the Mint, with the approbation of the Secretary of the Treasury, may prescribe.

§3. The Machinery of the Mint, not otherwise employed, and applicable to the purposes of this department, may be so applied under such restrictions as the general operations require, at the discretion of the Director.

§4. An account of the receipts and expenditures of this department shall be kept by such person, and in such manner as the Director may prescribe, an abstract of which shall be quarterly transmitted to the Treasury Department; the profits which may accrue therefrom shall be applied to the enlargement of the cabinet of medals and coins at the Mint, and for supplying national and scientific institutions with copies of the public medals. [c.f. Gem #1—ed.]

Letters to the Editor

Dear John,

Though I don't own a single American historical medal (as yet, at least!), I wanted to let you know how much I've enjoyed David MENCHALL's series on the medals of the French and Indian War. And I think you know how one thing can lead to another, for peripatetic persons such as you and I--well, as I was reading David's latest installment, I kept thinking--Louisbourg! Louisbourg! Now where in the devil is Louisbourg?" And while I was still

mulling this over, the article progressed to medals on the fall of Quebec, and the deaths of Montcalm and Wolfe. And I was suddenly transported back to that time, a few years ago, when Phyllis and I visited Quebec City, and the Plains of Abraham; and I remembered the Montcalm statue--which faces AWAY from the battlefield, and shows Fame seemingly snatching the laurel wreath from his head. . . But where in the devil IS Louisbourg?

My answer was readily at hand: my set of Francis Parkman's historical works, including his three-volume Montcalm and Wolfe, originally published in 1884. And so I sat down and virtually read the first volume at a sitting. Of course, I learned where Louisbourg is. I also learned some curious parallels--then as now, French Canada was outnumbered but unified; British North America was preponderant in population, but reluctant to surrender power to any central authority: a bunch of diverse, mutually-suspicious colonies, and getting them to agree on any common plan of action was like herding cats!

I also learned the melancholy detail that, after Braddock's mortal wounding at Duquesne, his men buried him in the road, so that the retreating wagon tracks would obliterate any trace of the grave, to prevent his body being found and mutilated. (They don't call the modern historical prize the "Parkman" for nothing; in passages like this, he writes with the soul of a poet.)

Anyway. You see where a simple detailing of historical medals can lead?!

Warm regards,

Harry Salyards

Hello John Adams,

A little over a year ago I read the following article in Coin World - Feb. 9, 2004. "Researchers continue survey of Comitia Americana Medals". You were listed as one of the 2 researchers. I was hoping you could help me.

I recently purchased a Libertas Americana Silver Medal on E-Bay and I am having a hard time finding out any information on it.

The medal comes with a C.O.A. in a dark green box with a 103 page booklet titled "Paris: Birthplace of the U.S.A." Copyright 1997. Everything about these items look new. The C.O.A. says; Re-issue of the most famous and historic of all medals celebrating the revolution of America against British occupation. Originally struck by Monnaie de Paris in 1783.

Libertas Americana - No.0541

Specification	Fineness	Silver 950%
	Weight	42.8gms
	Diameter	48.86mm
	Mintage	2500

Signed by Francoise Saliou - Mint master of Paris Mint.

The finish on the medal is mint-state Unc. (not proof) and is done in a

satin -antique look. It does not have a dot below the bust and I cannot see any edge seams. It does not measure 45.86 mm but measures 48 mm. On the edge (below the bust) is what looks like a very small oblong stamp (?) into the edge. With 10 power I still can't quite make out what it is.

Can you tell me any information on this medal - What year was it re-issued? Did they use the original dies to strike this? What is the stamp on the edge? What was the issue price? And what is today's value?

Thank you so much for anything you can do.

Sincerely,

Bill Bounds

CORRECTION – Khalil Gibron, an avid Dassier specialist, points out an error on page 20 of our February issue. "James Anthony Dassier" should be Jacques Antoine Dassier. [Actually, neither James Anthony nor Jacques Antoine engraved this particular medal. Rather, it was Jean Dassier who executed the obverse die in 1731; it was resurrected in 1760 for the medal in question. -ed.]

Khalil has a collection of over 400 Dassier medals and must be the world's leading expert on this subject (as well as on many others). We are urging him to become a regular contributor.

[Note: Harry is the renowned editor of Penny-Wise, a copper collector and a bibliophile to boot. We can't think of a

more lustrous addition to our ranks.
Someone please sell him a medal. —ed.]

The Bush-Cheney Inaugural Medals

Presidential Coin & Antique Company
6550-I Little River Turnpike
Alexandria, Virginia 22312.

Those of you who read the numismatic press are probably aware of the various design changes that have been made to the official medal. Briefly, this is what happened:

- 1) Obverse and reverse designs were selected by the Medals Committee. The obverse design, by Gladys Gunzer, was a profile of Bush and Cheney facing left, while the reverse featured a displayed eagle perched on an American flag. About 7500 each of the 2 ¾" and 1 ½" medals were struck by the Medalcraft Mint in anticipation of sale. These medals are now being referred to as "Type I Medals."
- 2) Unknown to the Medals Committee and to the Medalcraft Mint, the official of the main inaugural committee who oversaw the approval of all officially licensed inaugural souvenirs, decided that his authority extended to the approval of the design of the official medal. (This was the first time in history that anyone other than members of the Medals Committee ever exerted any decision making authority with respect to the design of the official medal!) This gentleman professed to be dissatisfied with the selected design and initially

demanding that both obverse and reverse designs be changed. This in spite of the fact that a total of 15,000 medals had already been struck.

- 3) After one false start in which a second obverse design (also by Gladys Gunzer) was approved and then quickly disapproved, the decision was made to strike a medal that bears the original obverse design and a new reverse displaying the Presidential Seal. To the experienced eye, it is obvious that this new reverse was not intended to be mated with the original obverse as the inaugural date, January 20, 2005, appears on both sides of the medal—a mistake the Medals Committee would never have made!

We have been fortunate in being able to obtain a limited number of both size Type I medals bearing the original reverse eagle and flag design. They are offered to you, while they last, at what was to be their original issue price of \$39.95 and \$12.95. Postage is \$5.00 + \$1.00 for each additional medal.

